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ABSTRACT

Part of a series on selected aspects of curriculum development, this monograph contains reading conference proceedings that include an opening address by author Marguerite Henry in which she shares personal experiences in her evolution as a writer and six papers on remedial reading and language arts. The first paper describes the neurological impress method of remedial reading instruction and provides two plans for using the method. The second paper contains an annotated list of books of poems for young children, while the third stresses the importance of encouraging creativity in the language arts classroom. The fourth paper defines oral interpretation and suggests ways of applying it to a reading program and the fifth is a poet's personal list of things to avoid in teaching poetry. The last paper is a statement on the importance of listening skills that suggests ways to emphasize these skills in a language arts classroom. (AEA)

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This monograph is one in a series of selected aspects of curriculum development.

Proceedings
of the
1979
Ninth Annual
Reading Conference
June 14

RHYTHM, RHYME, AND REASON

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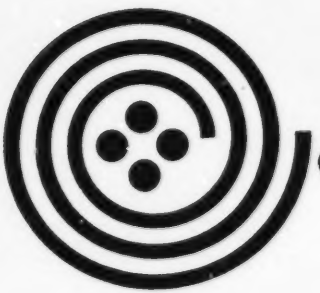

CURRICULUM RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT CENTER

SCHOOL OF EDUCATION,
INDIANA STATE UNIVERSITY
TERRE HAUTE

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School of Education, Indiana State University

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Richard L. Willey
Dean, School of Education

James E. Higgins
Director

PREFACE

Rhythm, Rhyme, and Reason--the theme of this year's Ninth Annual Reading Conference--comes at a time when there is a movement away from the arts in education. The trend is more in the direction of "back to basics," a reaction to some of the frustrating problems occurring in our schools. We reaffirm our belief in the value of literature and the arts in education in a number of articles appearing in these proceedings.

Marguerite Henry tells us of her own frustrating experience with a handwriting expert, who told her to "remember always that you are utterly without imagination." How fortunate she did not believe him . . . or did she? Our speakers remind us of the importance of rhythm, rhyme, and reason in a variety of ways, including poetry, oral interpretation, listening, and creative teaching. Finally, in "Nifty Neurological Notions," we are told how to help non-readers or severely retarded readers improve their condition.

Those who attended this conference will recall the excellent displays on the HCUC concourse. Many of these incorporated the arts in reading materials. There were several "book character" puppets to enjoy. Children enjoy making and writing their own books, and several of these were shown. Also included in the concourse display were teacher-made children's books. The "Right to Read" program was enhanced with a display of library materials. And Vernice Rogers's display, "Dinosaurs for Reading," showed how the theme of dinosaurs could be used across several areas and grades to enhance reading interests.

We hope that reading this preface makes you want to read the articles included in these proceedings. And if we are fortunate, for those of you who were unable to attend our Ninth Reading Conference, we hope these proceedings will trigger your interest and curiosity. We invite all of our readers to come next year and help us celebrate our Tenth Annual Reading Conference.

Vanita Gibbs
David C. Waterman

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RHYTHM, RHYME, AND REASON

PROGRAM OF

NINTH ANNUAL READING CONFERENCE

THURSDAY, June 14, 1979

9:30 - 11:00 A.M. Hulman Civic University Center - Room C

Presiding:
David C. Waterman, Co-chairperson

Welcome:
Harriet D. Darrow, Dean
Summer and Evening Sessions
Indiana State University

Opening Remarks:
Richard L. Willey, Dean
School of Education
Indiana State University

Introduction of Speaker:
Vanita Gibbs, Co-chairperson

Speaker:
Marguerite Henry
"The Wedding Between Truth and Fiction"

1:30 - 2:20 P.M.

Room AB - SaRetta Brown and Susan Proctor
"Nifty Neurological Notions"

Room C - Linda Sanning
"Early Times With Rhythm and Rhymes:
Poems for Young Children"

Room DE - Lynn Johnson
"Let's Allow Creativity in the Language Arts"

2:30 - 3:20 P.M.

Room AB - C. Sue Davis
"Oral Interpretation: An Adventure in Reading"

Room C - Russell Hamm
"Poetry: Rhythm, Rhyme, and Reason"

Room DE - Pamela J. Farris
"Listen to the Beat!"

"The things which the child loves remain in the domain of the heart until old age."

Kahlil Gibran

DISPLAYS ON THE CONCOURSE

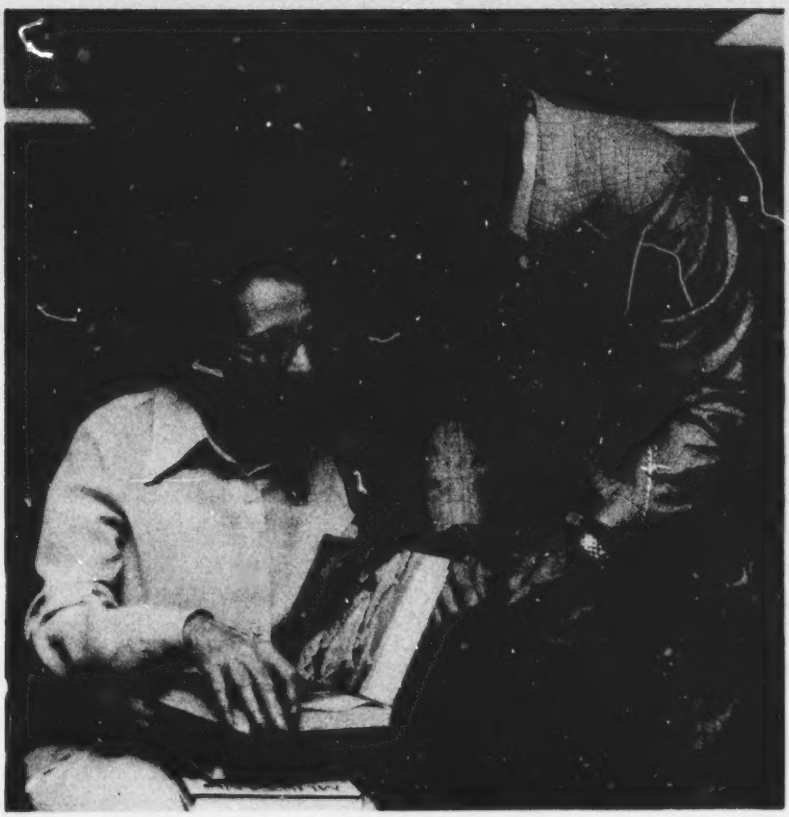
Louise Clark - Book Character Puppets

Barbara Baker - Right to Read
Carol Sutherland Library Materials
Richard Biberstine

Barbara Lehman - Children's Own Books
Sue Crombie

Vernice Rogers - Dinosaurs for Reading

El. Ed. 668
David C. Waterman - Teacher-Made Books



Marguerite Henry and Loran Braught discuss presentation topics listed on the Reading Conference program.

THE WEDDING BETWEEN TRUTH AND FICTION

Marguerite Henry

From age ten on, I was addicted . . . to the habit of writing. As early as that, I couldn't walk past a telegraph office in a railroad station without being lured by the inviting yellow tablet and the sharpened brown pencil chained to the counter. They were more irresistible than an opened box of divinity fudge. Compulsively, I stopped and wrote my telegram to the world.

Sometimes it was just a simple message, such as: BE SURE TO END YOUR TELEGRAM WITH L-O-V-E.

Other times I'd do a quick sketch of a horse's head, adding my favorite quote beneath:

> I look into your great brown eyes
> And wonder where the difference lies
> Between your soul and mine.

Furtively, then, I'd skip away, happy at this miniature outpouring.

My actual writing career began when I was twelve, with a $12.00 check from *The Woman's Home Companion*. The sum was payment-in-full for an article in the children's section of the magazine entitled "Hide and Seek Through Autumn Leaves." With check in hand, I decided at once to become a full-time writer so that I could buy a whole ranchful of horses. There would be a stallion for every mare and there'd be two colts--a suckling and a weanling--tagging at each mare's heels.

The ranch never materialized, but oh, the working writer! She kept on working--for a wild wide assortment of magazines from *True Detective* and *Photoplay* to *Saturday Evening Post*. My most memorable assignment was to interview a little cricket of a man so fragile that he had to bind up his legs in elastic bandages in order to walk. His mind, however, leaped to conclusions with lively sureness. This man, Archer Wall Douglas, was employed by big industry in the city of St. Louis to analyze the handwriting on job applications. He would prepare a profile on each applicant, and from his analysis the person was turned away or hired. If hired, it was often because Mr. Douglas went so far as to suggest a specific department for him.

This interview charted the whole course of my life, as it probably did hundreds of unsuspecting souls who painstakingly filled out applications. After the article was completed to the satisfaction of Mr. Douglas, he asked if I'd like my own handwriting analyzed. Since

---

Marguerite Henry has written many well-known and loved books for children, including *Misty of Chincoteague* and the Newberry Award winner *King of the Wind*.

it would cost nothing, I eagerly accepted. What he branded into my memory was said in tones of sympathy and compassion. "My dear," he confided as he placed a gentle, parchment-like hand over mine, "remember always that you are utterly without imagination." (And he repeated "utterly" in italics.)

He was right! I knew he was right and took his advice to heart . . . which explains why all my stories are based on F-A-C-T.

Apparently there are many fact-minded children in the world, for with each book the flood of questions narrows down to: "Are the characters real people?" "Are the incidents true, or do you just make them up?" "Did Grandpa Beebe in *Misty* really have whiskers in his ears as bristly as a library paste brush?" "Did Brighty actually uncover a murder in the Grand Canyon?"

The book *San Domingo, The Medicine Hat Stallion*, is no exception. "That Peter Lundy and his father, were they real?" "Are there any more Medicine Hat ponies left in the United States?" "Where did you get the name, San Domingo?" "Did Peter's father actually crawl five miles on his hands?" "Could Dice, the Dalmation, truly hypnotize horses?"

The answers are "No," and "Yes." *San Domingo* is a weft of truth and a warp of fiction, and the two are interwoven so closely that I myself can scarcely separate them.

It was a teacher who provided the sparks for my story. Her letter, dated one early December, read:

> Dear Mrs. Henry,
>
> I am a fourth grade teacher. Books are a part of my life, one of the best parts. It so happens that our little town's library is in the basement of our school and once a week each room has a half hour there to choose a book. When we return to our class, we just read the books.
>
> In my room is the boy, Andy Burke, who wrote you the letter I am enclosing. Let me tell you about him. He is ten years old, neglected, low average in intelligence, absolutely so poor in any achievement that his history is one of sitting, doing nothing (even though he could do a few things.) He came to me unable to write or spell, but he can read, a little. His home life is stark--drunken father who recently terrorized his children threatening to kill them with a gun. This boy, Andy, and his sister escaped by hiding under the kitchen sink. These tragedies are not unusual, you know, in our life today. We see them in schools all too often.
>
> Andy draws very well--but just one thing--HORSES! I found your book, *All About Horses*, for him two weeks ago in the library and he keeps it with him all of the time.

Today when we had returned from the library and were all happily getting acquainted with our books, I was sitting surrounded by my little slow readers who need help. Andy was not there but kept coming up to ask how to spell a word. That alone should have set off all bells ringing in my head, but then there are so many gongs in a teacher's head with so many children setting them off! After a time I got up to see what Andy's first request for words could possibly be. He said, "I'm writing to the person who wrote this book."

The fact that he by-passed all my careful work on letter-writing doesn't matter. The fact that he wanted to write, is doing it as well, as painstakingly as he has, is a revelation that will keep me going for days to come. I shall not ask him to rewrite this, nor would you think I should. Take his offering as a miracle. It surely is, and now we have a special reason for a merry Christmas--all three of us have.

P.S. I waited two and a half days to see what Andy's letter would say. He would not go out for recesses during this time. The expression on his face while writing was one of real happiness.

(Copy of Andy's handwritten letter)

I like the book that you wrote that is called *All About Horses*. I wished that I had one like it of my own. I like to study about horses and I like the beautiful pictures you have in your book. I wished that I had all the books about all the horses in the world for my own then I could know all about the different kinds of horses that are in the world. I know some of the names like Tennessee Walking Horse, Morgan horse, Palomino, Arabian horse. I only know these names of horses. I think that horses are pretty even if they are old horses. I had better start to quit.

Yours truly,
Andy Burke

For Christmas I couldn't help sending my *Album of Horses* inscribed simply "to Andy with love."

Shortly after the holidays came a brief note from the teacher:

Dear Mrs. Henry,

Andy has, after three days of writing, composed what he wanted to say to you. The letter is so poignant because that golden palomino was the thing in his life that was happy. The book you gave him already shows wear.

In the interest of Andy's schooling, I see now that I could teach spelling and math just through talk of horses.

Please believe that I have not exaggerated a degree in this happiness of Andy's discovery of the joy of reading and the revelation he has given me of his capabilities.

Enclosed with the teacher's note was the following letter in Andy's handwriting.

Dear Mrs. Henry,

The *Album of Horses* book that you sent to me was nice. For Christmas my teacher got me one just like it, and there is the same pictures in it! Now I have two of them. I like the picture of the Tennessee Walking Horse because I had one of my own. He was a beautiful palomino color and he could run very fast like you said in the book.

My horse and I and my little dog would go into our field. There was a big ditch there. My horse would jump over the ditch. My dog would go in the ditch and come out the other side. Then we would go up the hill to our pond. Then I would get off my horse. My dog would get the reins and make my horse run. I would wait for my horse to come back, and he would. Then we would go back home.

One day my big sister and my big brother were riding him at the same time. My sister and brother fell off. My big sister broke her arm. My horse stopped and looked at her then he went to her then went to his barn. I went and fed him something to eat and then I went to the house. When I was not out he jumped the fence. When I went to ride him he was not there! I saw him going up the road so I got a rope and went after him. I got him and took him home. He was sad but I made him happy and we played all day with my little dog and had a lot of fun together.

But my father sold my horse while I was in school and I did not want him to go. My mother said that he would not go into the trailer without me or my little dog. My mother waited until I got home from school but I did not put him in the trailer yet. My mother got mad. So I told her if I could go and see where they live, I would load the horse. My mother said yes. So every day up to this year I went. But they moved. So now I draw pictures of him in school.

Your friend,
Andy Burke

What made Andy decide to reveal--with eloquent restraint to be sure--the dark secret in his heart? In his first letter he led me to think he knew horses by name only. In the numbness of his hurt, he barely put out his feelers to a world he did not trust. Then, gaining confidence, he decided to reveal more.

You don't dismiss a boy like Andy Burke from your life. Nor his father. They haunt you in daylight and in dreams. You take their lives apart, studying them like insects under a microscope. What twist of mind made the father almost destroy the boy by selling the one thing he loved?

Try as I would, I couldn't wash the Burke family out of my consciousness. They lived on, in a kind of cocoon about which I tiptoed softly, keeping a careful distance, not wanting to tear the slender threads of their story, or daring to hasten its emergence.

Then one day I knew I had to start writing the story or the focus would be gone. But the safety of Andy had to considered. Why not change the boy's era, his locale, and of course his name, so that the father could not recognize himself and take out his anger on Andy.

On impulse, I set the time in the 1850s and the place in Wyoming. Little did I realize the mountain of work I would have to dig through; there was no climbing over it. It was like going back 125 years and stepping into Abraham Lincoln's world.

Having no imagination, I began by leaving home at Mole Meadow, Illinois, and heading west to California, to the Huntington Library, famous for its collection of diaries for the years I had chosen.

The librarians at the Huntington seemed in league with my search. They brought out stacks of books. And among them was one that held the nugget I'd been seeking.

It wasn't a printed book. It was hand-written in pen and ink by a traveler on the Oregon trail in 1842. As I opened it, a flower fell out. Someone had pressed it between the pages more than a hundred years ago. I was actually touching the past!

Now my excitement reached the bursting point. I called my artist and his wife and in their camper the three of us traveled the Oregon Trail--through Nevada Territory, through Utah, through the vast territory of Nebraska, to the starting point, St. Joseph, Missouri. (To my chagrin there was no Wyoming at that time! It was part of Nebraska Territory.)

At tumble-down trading posts, we pulled up short. Whatever faded name hung over the door we quickly erased in our minds and substituted a fine big sign that read JETHRO LUNDY'S TRADING POST & SMITHY.

On the direct line of the Overland Stage where Rawhide Creek meets up with the North Branch of the Platte River, we established the sprawling trading post for our fictional locale.

Immediately it came alive with horses snorting, mules braying, emigrants trying to trade their gaunt, sore-footed animals for fresh ones . . . . And towering above the confusion like a swarthy giant stood Jethro Lundy, fiery of eye and black of beard. Beside him young Peter Lundy, a wisp of a boy, wearing two braids like the Sioux Indians.

The only missing character now was a wise, understanding teacher like Andy Burke's. But there were no schools for Peter to attend, and

his mother was overly busy with a new baby and a senile grandmother. There had to be an outsider.

Right here serendipity stepped in. For years I had been corresponding with Robert O'Brislawn, who lived in Oshoto, Wyoming. I had been fascinated by his mission in life: to restore an almost extinct breed of horse--the Spanish Barb Mustang. As surveyor of the early West and now horse breeder, he seemed ready-made to become Peter's friend and mentor. Some day I knew that Mr. O'Brislawn would ride into one of my books, oversized hat and all, and here he was. I remember the day that I drove into the Cayuse Ranch to meet him for the first time. He was 82 years old, nipping at 83. In my diary that night I wrote, "Mr. O'Brislawn is mostly hat, and all heart; he will be perfect for the role of Peter's teacher."

I began to see him and his caravan like paper cutouts against the skyline. There were horses and burros, goats and chickens, dogs and cats approaching the trading post on Rawhide Creek. How he happened to stay on awhile with the Lundys to become Peter's teacher is, of course, a thread of fiction. But stay he did, teaching Peter the mysteries of arithmetic through their shared love of horses and burros. "If a hand be four inches," Mr. O'Brislawn proposed, "and your Medicine Hat stallion measures 13½ hands high, what is the difference, in inches, between your horse and my burro who is only seven hands high?" (It took me a little longer than Peter to figure that 54 inches minus 28 equals 26 inches--the difference between his stallion and the burro.)

Along about the second year of my research, the *World Book Encyclopedia* invited me to contribute an article on the Pony Express. As an inducement, they gave me a poster written in 1860. It read:

> WANTED
> Young, skinny wiry fellows not over 18. Must be expert riders, willing to risk death daily. ORPHANS PREFERRED.

My hands holding the poster began to tremble. By some miraculous touch, the gangling boy pictured in the poster turned out to be the spittin' image of Andy Burke, alias our Peter Lundy. Skinny. Intense. Willing to risk death daily.

Now at last I knew my characters--sinew and soul. I'd even found a dog to replace Andy's. He was a Dalmatian I'd met in a blacksmith's tent. Like Andy's dog, he could lead a horse by taking the reins and running with him. But he was even more gifted. He could hypnotize a skittish young horse into standing still while his first shoes were hammered into place. But when an experienced old horse came in for new shoes, the dog curled up in a corner and fell asleep.

I never did write that article for *World Book Encyclopedia*, but the poster they sent provided a believable and happy ending for my story. When Jethro Lundy trades Peter's horse for hard cash and hard

liquor, what more natural thing for the heartsick boy to do than join the Pony Express . . . there to be reunited with San Domingo, his beloved Medicine Hat stallion?

But to my bafflement the story did not stop there. My writing, leaping over all plans, became insistent. The real-life Andy Burke had gone through one devastating experience. Compulsively, I put him through another to make him whole again. The ending surprised, even shocked me. As I read it over, I couldn't help wondering what that guru of a graphologist from St. Louis would say if he were to return to this life. Would he perhaps see a whisper of imagination in my handwriting?

At least the dear Irishman, Robert O'Brislawn, didn't rule out the possibility, for his response to the book was:

"I read it through. You come damn near being a writer."

Speakers Sue Proctor, SaRetta Brown, Linda Sanning, and Lynn Johnson

"The readiness is all." William Shakespeare

"When I was young, I could remember anything whether it happened or not." Mark Twain

"Ah! what the world would be to us if the children were no more? We should dread the desert behind us more than the dark before." Longfellow

NIFTY NEUROLOGICAL NOTIONS

SaRetta Brown and Susan Proctor

Introduction

Various techniques are continually being tried and tested which may or may not help children learn to read. There are always some children who cannot learn to read ffectively using traditional approaches. Neurological-Impress, a method of remedial reading instruction involving unison reading between instructor and child, has been found to be both an efficient and effective system of assisting slow readers.

Reading is a skill which is learned in the same manner as any other skill such as cooking, swimming, driving, etc. This theory is supported by Frank Smith in *Understanding Reading*:[1]

> Learning to read is akin to any other skill; there are perhaps some specialized exercises that one can undertake to iron out particular difficulties, but there is no substitute for engaging in the activity itself.

History

The Neurological-Impress Method of Remedial Reading Instruction was created by a psychologist named R.G. Heckelman. He first tested the method in the Merced County Schools in California in 1961. Heckelman discusses his method in two related articles published in *Academic Therapy*.[2]

The Neurological-Impress method is not a new or original idea. It is very similar to K. Hoskisson's Assisted Reading.[3]

Perhaps if children were taught reading in a total immersion program such as Neurological-Impress which is free from pressure for the child, more of them would continue to enjoy reading.

> It is possible that the generalizing power of children can be utilized in learning to read without bogging them down with the minutiae of instruction and work sheets of beginning reading programs that may have no relevance for the reading process in which they are engaged.[4]

SaRetta Brown and Susan Proctor are reading teachers with the Vigo County School Corporation.

"How to" Section

Presenting Method - for non-readers or severely retarded readers.

Step A - Auditory Phase

1. Sit facing the child. The child looks at you, not the book.

2. Read a short story or page from a story aloud to the child.

3. Make sure the child focuses upon your face, especially your lips. Use your finger to lift the chin up to this position, without comment to the child.

4. Read the story three times.
   1st time - dramatic expression
   2nd time - more like silent reading speed
   3rd time - more speed

Step B - Paraphrasing or Comprehension Phase

1. Go through the story and tell the child what she/he should comprehend. For example, read a sentence, then tell the child what it means. Discuss characters, places, and other vocabulary words to give the child visual images of the content.

Step C - Echo Phase

1. Read the story by phrases. Echo--read a phrase then have the child repeat the phrase. If the child forgets, saying it with him/her is crucial for success. Start with two or three words, then increase the length.

2. Now sit by the child who looks at the print for the first time. Read a phrase, then have the child read it with you. Repeat each paragraph, reading by phrases.

NIM - Neurological-Impress Method

1. Read along with the child.

2. Be sure your voice is going into his/her ear.

3. Move your or his/her finger under every word. It is important that the finger be under the word as it is being said. However, the movement should be smooth with a sweeping motion from the end of one line to the beginning of the next.

4. Read at your normal rate of speed.

5. For two weeks read louder than the child, then drop your voice below hers/his. (Note: if the child begins to mumble after a while, then do step 5 again.)

6. Say any word that is not in the child's vocabulary louder.

7. In the beginning, repeat the story often. For example, reread every page or two.

8. Read until one of you (teacher or child) is tired. Each session should be approximately 15 minutes.

9. Don't ask questions about the story.

10. You should be able to tell if the method works after four hours or 16 sessions of reading time for 12-14 year olds, longer for younger children.

Practical Approaches

A. Materials to be used: printed format on both methods, Tok-backs, wrist weights, wrist bells, target on finger, suggested literature selections.

B. Time schedules and personnel - The instruction periods involve no more than twenty minutes per day using teacher, assistants, volunteer parents, or capable students.

Practical Application

A. Performance - choral reading is an important and necessary phase to promote enthusiasm.

B. Comprehension - Neurological-Impress promotes comprehension through creative writing, raising the literary level and promoting the best use of literary skills.

Summary

By way of summary, the Neurological-Impress method of inspiring children and adults to read can be a rewarding and stimulating method of teaching reading. NIM could be the most successful venture all concerned can embark on, in that it opens doors to the many facets of educational processes. It encourages "numberness" (or a desire for order) besides dealing with the abstractness of ideas in a concrete fashion. The maturity levels of students involved increase dramatically as they move from dependence to independence and self-reliance. When the student is asked or indeed finds it necessary to be an active (not passive) participant in the learning process, the whole project becomes a meaningful experience.

NOTES

[1]Frank Smith *Understanding Reading* (Holt, 1971).

[2]R.G. Heckelman "A Neurological-Impress Method of Remedial Reading Instruction," *Academic Therapy* 4 (1969): 277-282.

[3]Kenneth Hoskisson "The Many Facets of Assisted Reading," *Elementary English* 52 (March 1975): 312-315.

[4]Kenneth Hoskisson "Should Parents Teach Their Children to Read?" *Elementary English* 51 (February 1974): 295-299.

EARLY TIMES WITH RHYTHM AND RHYMES: POEMS FOR YOUNG CHILDREN

Linda Sanning

As Dr. Waterman said in his introduction, I was copy editor for last year's reading conference proceedings. In my job as copy editor in the School of Education, I spend a good amount of time each day delving into dictionaries. I enjoy tracking down definitions and spellings in my thumb-indexed editions, but I've come to realize that some people have no affection at all for *The American Heritage* and *Webster's Unabridged*. This became apparent when I gave two dictionaries as graduation presents this month and received almost identical thank you notes saying how much the graduates appreciated the gift. They didn't like the gift . . . just appreciated it (or said they did). Often we feel lucky as teachers when kids respond this way to poetry. Even if they don't like it, if they will at least admit to appreciating poetry, we're happy. In the next half hour or so I'm going to lead you on a browsing tour through some books of poems and rhymes that young children can appreciate and (Who knows?) maybe even like.

But first I want to tell a story about a fourth grade boy who came home from school and told his Mom he needed a dictionary. He said his teacher thought dictionaries were really important. "Mom," he said, "she says they're *essensual*." Well, I think dictionaries are essential and "essensual," and I think poetry is, too. That young boy's seeming misunderstanding actually reflects a pretty good perception of what language is all about. Language is sensual (or *sensuous* for those of you who are purists when is comes to word usage). And even though this may seem doubtful when we see words stripped of their natural context and lined up in alphabetical order in a dictionary, doubt about the sensuousness of language vanishes when we open a volume of poetry . . . if it's good poetry, of course.

It's poetry's appeal to the senses that makes early experiences with rhythm and rhyme so beneficial for preschoolers and beginning readers. Now we know that children are highly susceptible to influence through the senses. Even more so than adults. So it makes sense to take advantage of this openness to influence through the senses in the process of teaching children to read. The more we can do that relates those abstract marks on the flat pages to things a child can touch, taste, see, smell, hear, the more reason a child has for learning to read.

Linda Sanning is copy editor in the School of Education Publications Office.

For those interested in sharing poetry with young children, the following list may offer possibilities, both pleasant and practical. Terre Haute libraries where each title may be found are listed after a brief description of each book. Library abbreviations are as follows:

P.L. public library
m. main (downtown)
n. north (Plaza North)
s. south (Southland Shopping Center)
w. west (West Terre Haute)
e. east (Meadows)
b. bookmobile (mediamobile)
T.M. Teaching Materials Center (ISU Library)
( ) Call numbers are given in parentheses.

Poems for Young Children
An Annotated List of Books Available in Terre Haute Libraries

ABC'S

Hoberman, Mary Ann
Nuts to You and Nuts to Me, An Alphabet of Poems.
A poem for each letter of the alphabet. The vocabulary is current. For example, "W" is for windshield.
P.L. (JP) m., e.

Newberry, Clare Turlay
The Kittens' ABC.
A short verse about cats for each letter. Pleasant ink-on-soft-paper illustrations.
P.L. (JP) n., s., e., w., b.

Piatti, Celestino
Celestino Piatti's Animal ABC.
One of the nicest ABC books. Each letter is illustrated with a boldly colored animal and four-line rhyme.
P.L. (JP) m., n., s., w., b.

Children's T.V. Workshop
The Sesame Street Book of Letters.
Letters of the alphabet introduced in verse.
P.L. (JE) n., s.

About Children

Frank, Josette
More Poems to Read to the Very Young.
Realistic illustrations. Several poems on each page.
P.L. (J821.08:F) m., n., s., b.

Greenfield, Eloise
Honey, I Love and other love poems.
Love poems to the world from a child's point of view.
P.L. (J 811.5G) m.

Jacobs, Leland B.
All About Me, Verses I Can Read.
This book was intended for first graders to read to themselves, but works nicely with nursery school children because of its limited vocabulary. All the poems are written in the first person.
T.M. (811.5)

Livingston, Myra Cohn
I'm Hiding.
Suitable for reading to a few children in a story corner. The text describes places where a child might hide.
T.M. (811)

Livingston, Myra Cohn
Listen, Children, Listen: An Anthology of Poems for the Very Young.
An anthology of poets, most of whom are modern. A small book with black and white illustrations.
P.L. (J 821:L) m., s.

Animals

Chen, Tony
Run Zebra, Run.
Realistically illustrated animal poems. Includes many unusual animals.
T.M. (811.5)

Domanska, Jania
What Do You See?
A single poem about animals and insects with a few lines of text on each page. Striking graphic illustrations.
T.M. (E)

Fisher, Aileen
Feathered Ones and Furry.
These simple poems, illustrated with woodcuts, explore the differences among birds, animals, and people.
P.L. (J 811:F) m., e.

Fisher, Aileen
My Cat Has Eyes of Sapphire Blue.
A book with a strong sense of unity; all the poems are about cats.
T.M. (811.5)

Kumin, Maxine W.
No One Writes a Letter to the Snail.
Colorful illustrations. Some of the poems are too difficult for preschoolers, but the ones that are appropriate are good.
P.L. (J 811:K) m., b.

Turner, Nancy Byrd
When It Rained Cats and Dogs.
A story in verse. Many of the breed names of dogs would be unfamiliar to young children, but the book is useful as an early introduction to nonsense verse.
P.L. (JP) m., n., s., w., b.

City and Country

Chute, Marchette
Around and About.
Illustrations for this book are done in dark green paper silhouettes.
P.L. (J 811:C) m., n., w., b.

Fisher, Aileen
In the Woods, In the Meadow, In the Sky.
These colorful verses compensate for the black and white pictures.
T.M. (811) P.L. (J 811:F) m., e., b.

Hopkins, Lee Bennett, ed.
The City Spreads its Wings.
Includes city poems by Langston Highes, Carl Sandburg, Lois Lenski, Gwendolyn Brooks, and others.
T.M. (811.5)

Jacobs, Leland
Playtime in the City.
Simple poems about urban activities. Some of these could be acted out.
T.M. (811.5)

Judson, Jerome
I Never Saw . . . .
Large illustrations and a brief text make this book a good choice for story time. The theme of this collection is looking for the extraordinary aspects of everyday things.
T.M.

McGinley, Phyllis
All Around the Town.
Verses describing city sights and sounds.
P.L. (JP) m., e.

Counting

Hoberman, Mary Ann
The Looking Book.
This book is useful for showing children how books' pages are numbered.
P.L. (JP) m.

Sendak, Maurice
One Was Johnny.
Johnny has ten visitors who appear and disappear.
P.L. (JP) m., n., s., e., w., b.

Le Sieg, Theo.
Ten Apples Up On Top.
A rhyming counting book with cartoon-like characters.
T.M. (E) P.L. (JE) m., s., e., b.

Mother Goose

Rojankovsky, Feodor
The Tall Book of Mother Goose.
A tall, slender volume of Mother Goose rhymes with up-to-date artwork.
P.L. (J 398:M) m., s., b.

Study Prints
The Many Moods of Mother Goose.
The Child's World, Inc.
Elgin, Illinois 60120, $8.00
Eight sturdy posters illustrating Mother Goose rhymes.

Seasons

Clifton, Lucille
Everett Anderson's Year.
This book includes positive and negative aspects of inner-city life without any cynicism. Each poem is about a month of the year.
P.L. (JP) m., n., s., e., w., b.

Fisher, Aileen
Going Barefoot.
One of Fisher's best books. It draws a child's attention to the fact that people wear shoes most of the time, while animals go barefoot. By the end of the story it's summer and time for people to go barefoot too.
P.L. (JP) e., b.

Kessler, Ethel and Leonard
All for Fall.
Lovely soft-toned illustrations and a simple text about the ways fall differs from the other seasons.
T.M. (811.54)

Tudor, Tasha
Around the Year.
Nostalgic illustrations and brief descriptions of each month.
P.L. (JP) m., s., e., w., b.

Teaching Aids

Childcraft, The How and Why Library.
This may not be checked out of the libraries, but if you have or can borrow a copy of Volume one, look at the poems in the front of the book. This is the best extensive collection of poetry for young children that I have found.

Grayson, M.F.
Let's Do Finger Plays.
Illustrated in black and white, this book is primarily for the teacher's use. Directions for finger play movements are interspersed with the text.
P.L. (J 372.21: G) m., n., s., e., w., b.

Tashjian, Virginia A., ed.
Juba This and Juba That, Story Hour Stretches for Large or Small Groups.
A collection of group activities including chants, rhymes, poetry, stories, songs, riddles, finger plays, and tongue twisters. I especially liked a poem about a pocketful of chocolate pudding.
P.L. (J 796.1 T) m.

LET'S ALLOW CREATIVITY IN THE LANGUAGE ARTS

Lynn Johnson

I hope the word "allow" in the title was the one word that jumped from the conference program into your mind. It may cause some tension within us as teachers, because it is placing a lot of responsibility on us. In large part, it is up to us to "allow" creativity in the language arts, or even in our classroom. We may blame administrators, facilities, curriculum materials, and low level students for the way we teach, but all of us really know who sets the tone in our classroom when we close that door. We, the teachers, do. Let us as educators examine our top priority, children, in regard to creativity.

Contemporary researchers conceive creative behavior as a characteristic possessed in some degree by all individuals, not a genetic gift bestowed on a very few (Gale, 1969). It seems that the interaction of genetic inheritance and the effect of environment and personalities upon the child make all children different in creative potential, as well as other abilities. Smith (1966) likens this view of the unique child to a canvas being used by an artist. The form is the same, but each stroke of the artist's brush transforms the canvas into a unique creation, different from any other. If everyone possesses some degree of creative ability, the nurturance of this ability depends on the world the child is born into and travels in, as well as the people the child interacts with. The problem for education would seem to be encouraging and releasing the creative potential of each child (Gale, 1969).

It should be remembered that the potential for creativeness among children probably differs as much as any other ability children possess. Many variables affect creativity. As teachers we should never preset a standard of creativity in our minds as an evaluative criterion. Precisely because of each child's uniqueness, teachers must relate to children on each one's level of creativity. It should also be remembered that different age levels display their own types of creative expression (Russell, 1956), depending on their perception of the world. I can think of three personal experiences that reflect the differences in children's creative expression but also give credence to the idea that creative potential, itself, is universal.

The first experience happened while I ate lunch with my young son. He had taken a few bites of a cracker when suddenly he stopped, examined the cracker from varying angles, then began pushing it along the tray of his highchair while saying, "Choo-choo Daddy, choo-choo." A cracker had been magically transformed into a locomotive. His imaginative play seemed to be an example of creativity that most parents and early childhood educators see daily.

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Another incident that remains clearly in my mind happened after I had been teaching several years. Mike, a student in one of my language arts groups, was having difficulty getting started on a poem concerning nature. He came up to my desk to confide in me that he never did well in creative writing, hated poetry, and could not think of a thing to put on his paper. After some thoughtful interaction, we both donned safety patrol rain coats and ventured out to the school playground in the middle of a rain storm. After the rain had pelted Mike for a few minutes he turned to me and said, "You know what's happening here? God is washing the earth." I perceived Mike's statement as truly creative, especially for a boy who could have been considered non-creative by the products he had handed in throughout his young school career.

The third experience I recall involved Michelle, a student in an academically gifted class I taught, who also happened to be very creative in many ways. She wrote and illustrated an entire book about a "chalk man" who was the imaginary friend of a group of children. It was so creative and well-done that I recommended it for publication.

What I have attempted to recall from these experiences is that creativity can come forth from children of all ages, abilities, and backgrounds. It can range from a very young child biting a cracker into a shape that reminds him of a train to the writing of a book, painting of a picture, or development of a scientific theory. Smith (1966) summarizes the thoughts I have presented about creativity when he says:

> All children are born with some creative potential although there are differences in the degrees of creativity in individuals. Creativity occurs at practically all ages and in all fields of human endeavor. It is developmental, and its growth depends largely on the environment in which it is placed and the conditions which nurture it or thwart it.

A logical question at this point would seem to be "What is creativity?" After surveying major theoretical approaches to creativity, McCandless and Evans (1978) see creative behavior as representing both process and product and including all or some of the following:

1. Complex thinking of unknown proportions
2. The ability to see new relationships among objects or events
3. Unusual attention to the environment
4. A willingness to engage in fantasy
5. The ability to formulate and test alternate hypotheses
6. Complex problem solving and problem finding ability

7. Skills in communicating thoughts to others

8. Novel or original production.

McCandless and Evans (1978) have also developed a list of five assumptions that they believe must be considered when discussing creativity. I would like to suggest their list be used as a basic guide when considering creativity and its educational implications:

1. Creativity is an aspect of mental behavior that can be expressed in a variety of ways at a number of different levels.

2. All children possess creative abilities to some degree.

3. Creativity and measured intelligence are not one and the same.

4. Creative abilities can be developed under the "right" conditions.

5. The development of creative abilities is (or should be) a prime educational goal.

The last two assumptions seem vitally important, especially since the United States Office of Education has designated creativity as an area of giftedness that should receive differentiated instruction (Marland, 1972). It seems as if creativity has recently become important enough to be stressed in educational practice. Maybe we are following Plato's lead when he said, "What is honored in a country will be cultivated there."

The cultivation of creativity can be accomplished by classroom teachers. Torrance (1965) has conducted many studies that indicate that the behavior of teachers can make differences in students' creative functioning. If teachers believe that only a limited number of students are or can be creative, the degree of their encouragement of creativity will be hampered. This belief would certainly have an effect upon the classroom learning environment. Teachers who want creativity will have to live with the fact that their classrooms will not be neat, quiet, and orderly (Gale, 1969). Following are ten ideas for developing a favorable climate for creative thinking in the classroom:

1. Classroom atmosphere is one of acceptance that encourages the original, new, and different.

2. Activities and questions that don't have one right answer should be offered.

3. Utilize techniques such as brainstorming, values clarification, and open endedness exercises to encourage divergent thinking.

4. Teacher gives fewer hints for solutions to problems, allowing time for incubation, but offers suggestions when defeat sets in.

5. Encourage a wide range of interests and value innovative behavior.

6. Have children elaborate, through various media and modalities, their concepts and understandings.

7. Free the student from the threat of evaluation during the creative phase of thinking.

8. Increase expectations for more original responses gradually since the warm-up to creative thought is progressive.

9. Structure the situation for enjoyment and fun.

10. Tolerate, even encourage seemingly wild ideas during the productive thinking phase.

It is true that this type of classroom may be quite a departure from many now in existence. It must be remembered, however, that facilitating, flexible teachers nurture creativity in children; while conforming, rigid, fearful teachers retard or destroy it (Frost and Rowland, 1969). Educational emphasis, as well as teacher attitude and practice, would also have to change.

Habitually, educational programs have concentrated on memory components of the intellect rather than creative thinking components (Frost and Rowland, 1969). Reversing this emphasis might result in sustained creativity through the school years, or perhaps throughout a lifetime.

The language arts would seem to be a natural subject area for creative process and product, for teachers as well as students. The language arts are easily integrated with all other subjects because of the variety and breadth of their encoding and decoding components. Smith (1973), who has written books on creativity and all subject areas, has stated that the teaching of the language arts appears to be one of the most versatile means for developing creativity in children. Five components of creative expression are especially applicable to the language arts:

1. fluency
2. flexibility
3. originality
4. elaboration
5. sensitivity.

"Fluency" is the amount or number of ideas a person can think of. "Flexibility" deals with shifts in thinking about one idea or subject. "Originality" is the uniqueness or unusualness of an idea. "Elaboration" involves embellishing or adding details to a basic idea. "Sensitivity" can be a keen awareness to the environment or the implications and

consequences of an idea. These five components characterize creative potential, the creative process, and creative products. The expression of creative thinking through writing and speaking, if allowed, is natural for children, and it is also a good way for teachers to observe creative talent.

So, teachers, (to use some basketball terminology) the ball is in our court. Creativity is possessed in some degree by all children. In the classroom, it is up to the teacher to nurture the unique creative potential in all students by setting up an environment that aids and allows creative development. We, as teachers, can make the difference by our attitudes, methodologies, and practices. We have the chance to continue the development of the joyous creativity we all have observed in young children. The job, however, is not an easy one, for we must have certain assumptions and a commitment to a philosophical base that stresses the uniqueness and potential of all children before we can undertake the responsibility of nurturing creativity. As motivation for that task a quote from Gilbert Highet may be inspirational. "A poem lasts longer than a city or a scientific formula. A thought will outlive a bomb or an empire" (Ace, 1952).

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For a copy of "Some Ideas for Creative Expression" handed out at the conference meeting send a stamped, self-addressed envelope to:

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Speakers Pamela Farris, Russell Hamm, and Sue Davis

"A teacher who is attempting to teach without inspiring the pupil with a desire to learn is hammering on cold iron." Horace Mann

"Perhaps the most effective and natural reinforcement is simply showing an interest in what children have to say." B. McCandless

"You can learn many things from children, how much patience you have for instance." Frank Jones

ORAL INTERPRETATION: AN ADVENTURE IN READING

C. Sue Davis

A few weeks ago I was invited to attend the University of Illinois' Chamber Theatre Ensemble's production of two short stories by Eudora Welty, "The Petrified Man" and "Why I Live at the P.O." This was a very exciting and special occasion since Ms. Welty was there in person for the production. Her reactions upon seeing her stories staged were most insightful. She said, "I saw that my stories really worked. You never know if they work or not, but up there they came alive. And the characters really were funny." Here we have the author of the piece of literature seeing her black marks on a white page actually come to life. Of course the characters were real to her, but by seeing these stories staged she could see them live for other people as well. She could actually see a very enthusiastic audience appreciate her stories.

To make a story or a poem come to life, come to life so it is a real part of human experience, can certainly be a means of encouraging and stimulating a person's desire to read. One way of accomplishing this is through oral interpretation of literature and the group reading. Oral interpretation, at the most simplistic level, is reading aloud. Yet the word "interpretation" adds many more dimensions to the process of merely reading out loud. Oral interpretation encompasses the understanding of a literary text and the communication of that text to oneself or to others. The student analyzes the text to understand how the text "feels when it speaks,"[1] the meaning of the text; and then he demonstrates his understanding by communicating the text orally. So "his performance is not the record of his previous experience with a particular work but a real experiencing of that very work. The interpreter is an experiencer of a literary work--a speaker of it, a doer of it--and each time he experiences the work, whether with only himself as audience or with others, he finds out something about it."[2]

Certainly everyone realizes the importance of stirring a student's excitement and love for literature as a part of the educational process. If a child, or a student of any age, can become an "experiencer" and a "doer" of literature, he or she will be able to respond more fully to the printed page and therefore will be stimulated to do more reading. Developing and sustaining literary appreciation and the desire to read are obviously some of the goals of a reading program. Robert Whitehead, in his book *Children's Literature: Strategies of Teaching*, argues for the development of literary appreciation and a sequential program of activities with literature as a part of a reading program.

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> Such a plan views literature as a functional part of the total reading program, making a significant contribution to both reading and the building of an appreciation for literature by: motivating children to read more and better books; helping boys and girls to explore new interests and to tackle new problems; providing youngsters with meaningful, literature-centered reading practice; exposing the young reader to the great literary heritage of the past and the present.[3]

Whitehead advances various types of teaching methods to attain these goals. One of the methods discussed is oral interpretion. Whitehead's focus is on "the teacher as leader." By this he means the teacher is the interpreter. Interpreting is, of course, one function of the teacher, and we are all aware of the importance of the teacher reading aloud to the students. But my proposal takes this idea one step further by letting children also become the interpreters, the experiencers, the doers for a different and perhaps even more rewarding encounter with reading and literature. Whitehead feels that "Realistic experiences and situations that capture the audience and involve them actively in the process are to be sought after and utilized."[4] Working with oral interpretation, students can realistically experience the literature and be actively involved. They do not always have to be the audience. In order to involve many children in the activity, the teacher will find it more advantageous to use the group reading rather than the solo reader.

Group reading is sometimes called readers theatre, theatre of the imagination, or (if prose fiction is being used) chamber theatre. Here at Indiana State we use the name listeners theatre. Group reading occurs when two or more interpreters communicate their understanding of a text to others. These readers will try to express the feeling and meaning of the story or poem to the audience both vocally and physically. Obviously, vocal tone and inflections are important in communicating the text to listeners, but body movement is also important. When the readers use movement and gestures, a character can become more believable, character relationships can be more clear, and various settings can be defined. Robert Breen, the originator of chamber theatre says of the group performance, "The viva voce presentation of literature provides those elements of paralanguage and kinesics that place a literary text more actively in the condition of life. The simultaneity of action and reaction that the stage allows makes the relationship of characters more immediate and perhaps more convincing."[5]

The group reading is not to be seen as an easy or inexpensive way to do a play. It is, however, an effective strategy for getting students involved with reading and enjoying literature. First a story or poem is chosen to be read by the group. It is then discussed so that all will understand what is happening (the plot action), who takes part in the action (the characters), and what is the meaning (the theme). Once a basic understanding of the story or poem has been reached, it is time to assign parts. If a story is being used, the narrator and characters

are designated. If young children are involved, it may be most helpful for the teacher to read the narration. If the children are handling the narrative elements of the story, it is possible to divide the narration between two or, depending on the story, more children. The following excerpt from *The Little Boy Who Loved Dirt and Almost Became a Superslob* by Judith Vigna demonstrates how a narration can be divided for two readers. The numbers refer to the first and second readers. Slashes indicate where one reader stops and the other begins.

1
Jonathon James now and then rolled in the mud and splattered

his food and never hung his clothes, except on trees./
2
Liking dirt, especially at bathtime, he dreamed of joining

the Superslobs who, he'd heard, lived happily in the mud./
1
And so he went (although he knew his mother wouldn't like

it) to where . . .

in deep dark tunnels, wearing mud instead of

clothes, the Superslobs lived./
2
They never washed and never brushed and never bathed--and
1
smelled./ They ate dirt, mostly.

1 2
Jonathon James now and then rolled in the mud/ and splattered
1 2
his food/ and never hung his clothes,/ except on trees.
1 2 1
Liking dirt,/ especially at bathtime,/ he dreamed of joining

the Superslobs who, he'd heard, lived happily in the mud./
2 1
And so he went/ (although he knew his mother wouldn't like
2
it)/ to where . . .

in deep dark tunnels, wearing mud instead of

clothes, the Superslobs lived./
1 2
They never washed and never brushed and never bathed/--and
1
smelled./ They ate dirt mostly.[6]

The teacher/director should remember the narrative structure's importance to the story when dividing lines so as not to lose the sense or continuity of the story.

If a poem is to be used for the group reading, the same principles would be followed. Character parts, if any, are assigned and line divisions are made. When dividing lines, again remember to maintain the sense of the poem, this time being sure to retain the rhythmic pattern. In fact, the rhythm of the poem may suggest natural division of the lines. The following poem, "I Wouldn't" by John Ciardi, is divided for seven readers.

1
There's a mouse house

In the hall wall
2
With a small door

By the hall floor
3
Where the fat cat

Sits all day

Sits that way

All day

Every day

Just to say,
4
"Come out and play"
5
To the nice mice

In the mouse house

In the hall wall
6
With the small door

By the hard floor.

7
And do they

Come and play

When the fat cat

Asks them to?

All
Well, would you?[7]

The next excerpt from Ciardi's "Why Nobody Pets the Lion at the Zoo" is divided by couplets.

1
The morning that the world began.
The Lion growled a growl at Men.

2
And I suspect the Lion might
(If he's been closer) have tried a bite.

3
I think that's as it ought to be
And not as it was taught to me.[8]

"The Pinwheel's Song," also by John Ciardi, can utilize multiple voices as well as the solo voice.

All
Seven around the moon go up

1
(Light the fuse and away we go)

2 and 3 4 and 5
Two in silver/ and two in red

6 and 7 1
And two in blue,/ and one went dead.

All
Six around the moon.

All
Six around the moon go up,

5
Six around the moon.

2 and 3 5 and 6
Whirl in silver,/ whirl in blue,

All 5
Sparkle in red,/ and one burned through.

All
Five around the moon.[9]

The poem ends with no one remaining to go as far as the moon.

To work with group reading it is not necessary to have a stage, lighting equipment, costumes, make-up, scenery, or even props. Group reading can be done right in the classroom space using whatever equipment is available and functional to the story. Because the action is primarily in the imagination of the audience, no realistic set pieces, scenery, or costumes need to be present. Ordinary straight chairs can be placed in interesting patterns to help create mood or scene. Tables can become caves or cages or almost anything through the use of the imagination. Stools of various heights are often used; wooden boxes of different sizes, step ladders, platforms, and sometimes even upside down trash cans are seen. The teacher need only take care that the action is not too complicated for the children to execute and that movement enhances the story or poem rather than detracting from it.

The group reading may be utilized in many situations. It may be a part of a course related project; it may be an activity in and of itself; or it may be planned and rehearsed as a program to be presented to another group. As a course related project, the group reading can engage students in something that might otherwise be a bit dull, interesting them through participation. Several years ago one of our Laboratory School teachers used group reading during a unit on health. She organized the program around the theme of good eating habits. Some of the children read sections from the textbook; others had poems to read; and she included several songs to spark even more interest in the unit of study. The children were sharpening reading skills, learning about foods, and having fun all at the same time. It seems that a creative instructor could use this method to add excitement to history, science, or almost any subject area.

If group reading is used, in and of itself it would be a part of the reading program. But perhaps in conjunction with this or one of the other units of study, a program centered around a holiday or theme could be presented for another classroom or for parents. To share a reading with others puts much less strain on the child than a situation where he is forced to recite memorized lines.

Although group reading has many applications, its primary contribution to the education process is through literature. It can elicit an excitement about reading and a love of literature that may never be reached in any other way. Kemp Malone who was Professor Emeritus of

English literature at John Hopkins University has said,

> In learning how to read a text aloud a student learns the text, comes to know it in depth. Sympathic understanding comes out to full thus and only thus. Silent reading, however strongly focused, remains passive and unfruitful in comparison. Until we have taught our students how to read aloud we have not taught them how to read.[10]

Through the active experience of reading aloud, and especially reading aloud as a part of a group reading, a child can become a doer, an interpreter of literature.

NOTES

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[2]Joanna H. Maclay and Thomas O. Sloan, *Interpretation: An Approach to the Study of Literature* (New York: Random House, 1972), p. 7.

[3]Robert Whitehead, *Children's Literature: Strategies of Teaching* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1968), pp. 1-2.

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[5]Robert Breen, "Chamber Theatre," in Richard Haas and David A. Williams, *The Study of Oral Interpretation: Theory and Comment* (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Co. Inc., 1975), p. 208.

[6]Judith Vigna, *The Little Boy Who Loved Dirt and Almost Became a Superslob* (Chicago: Albert Whitman and Co., 1975), pp. 1-8.

[7]John Ciardi, "I Wouldn't," in *You Read to Me, I'll Read to You* (Philadelphia, J.P. Lippencott Co., 1962), p. 11.

[8]John Ciardi, "Why Nobody Pets the Lion at the Zoo," in *The Reason for the Pelican* (Philadelphia, J.P. Lippencott, Co., 1962), p. 9.

[9]John Ciardi, "The Pinwheel's Song," in *The Reason for the Pelican* (Philadelphia, J.P. Lippencott Co., 1962), p. 22.

[10]Kemp Malone, "The Next Decade," in Richard Haas and David A. Williams, *The Study of Oral Interpretation: Theory and Comment* (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Co. Inc.), p. 213.

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POETRY: RHYTHM, RHYME, AND REASON

Russell Hamm

Why would a session on poetry be offered at a reading conference? First of all, verse or much worse can be the very turn-on to the whole wide world of reading. Children like the repetition, the music, the imagery of poetry . . . . Poetry can motivate. Secondly, poetry is not a mutually exclusive category. There is prose that is poetry, because of its preciseness, its vividness, its alliteration . . . . And I have a theory: Poetry grows out of agony, ecstasy--the human being trying to make contact, to relate to another or others. And what in essence is reading (language arts) all about: It's communicating. Poetry is the ultimate brew of communication. How intensely children feel: Their eyes dance; their hearts flutter. Great poems are written by the young--until some no longer are able to endure the existential paradox and leap from the boat like Crane, from the bridge like Berryman . . . .

My dirty dozen of <u>do nots</u> in poetry:

1. Poetry is not rhyme, rhyme, rhyme. Poetry comes in all sizes and shapes. As Jim Carlin would say: Here are some modest examples:

<u>Pigeon Music</u>

Caudle-riddle-rah bow neck

MATERIAL REMOVED DUE TO COPYRIGHT RESTRICTIONS

Coo-do caudle-riddle-rah

<u>Untitled</u>

Man made God in his own image

MATERIAL REMOVED DUE TO COPYRIGHT RESTRICTIONS

In his strength he made hell.

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Park Bench--Loring Park

It is October in the sun,

Brown squirrel, drab sparrow, dark grackle.*

Not just rhyme. How many students in writing themes, in fear and trembling, are more concerned with the capital letter at the beginning of the sentence and the period at the end of the sentence than what goes in between? How many poems are written with the rhyme words and filling in between? Oh, somewhere I can hear a teacher say: "Johnnie, that is not a poem, not a good poem anyway, . . . because we know good poems rhyme, don't we? You'll have to find another favorite poem to share with the class, Johnnie."

2. If you would have children enjoy poetry do not make it mechanical. Do not tear it apart by metering it, measuring it, and telling them what the poet said. Poetry is to be read aloud--letting them hear the music, letting them see the imagery, letting them see the magic words . . . and asking what it means to them!

3. The poetry chosen for class should be within the parameters of the child's experience. "Casey at the Bat" and "The Owl and the Pussy Cat" are not to be denigrated. It's better to start with verse or much worse . . . if the children are turned on, than to teach esoteric, sophisticated poetry that turns the children off. It is an old saw but appropriate: Start where the children are. Students may not be interested in your damned daffodil.

4. If you would teach poetry, you must have tried poetry yourself. You, too, must have been there. One of my treasures is a postal card from a gentleman who had clipped one of my "poems" (in quotes), pasted it on the postal card, and had written below the poem "have you tried Epsom salts?" You get a greater appreciation of poetry if you too have struggled. It "ain't easy." Perhaps one of my greatest mistakes in college was taking too many creative writing courses with instructors who talked much about writing but never did. What can be learned from such teachers? I learned most about poetry from workshops with Louise

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*The poems are from Hamm's volume of poetry, *Hooks for Darkness*, published in 1964 by Naylor of San Antonio, Texas.

Bogan and Richard Wilbur: They were published poets; they had been there. If you would teach children, cover your walls with rejection slips. Keep writing yourself.

5. Poetry is very personal, and to criticize a child's poetry is criticizing the child. It's much like grading a love letter and returning it to the sender. The best theme I ever wrote at IU was received by the teacher as follows: Where did you copy it? I never got the theme back; she's still probably searching--but damn it, I wrote it . . . . I was inspired like Coleridge. You would be amazed how many students drop by the office yet today, with poems they've written (even young men) . . . with eyes downcast as if they had committed a sin and almost surreptitiously, reluctantly handing the poem to me: What do you think? I accentuate the positive: These are your best lines. This I especially like. (Incidentally, your friends are your worst enemies when it comes to criticizing your masterpiece.)

6. The best writing children have done for me has come out of an immediate experience. You can't write on an empty stomach. Example: Close your eyes. What do you hear you haven't heard before? What do you feel you haven't felt before? Now write a brief paragraph--using senses other than sight--as if you were a blind person. I still have themes in my file written using this technique. Or: Blindfold a person; have him touch the face of another person, describing the features of the face. Assignment: Write a paragraph so graphically that the other students can identify the person. Students need to write about what they have experienced. Some of the best writing--especially poetry--is by problem children--the rebels, although they often need help with spelling and punctuation.

7. Poetry involves involvement. In fifth grade at Cloverdale, we did an Indian dance to Longfellow's poem, "Hiawatha." Did you ever go outside to read a poem about nature? At Bloomington High School, another teacher and I did a patriotic play simply by letting students do a choral reading. Involvement, too, requires that the teacher "get with it."

8. In teaching poetry (or grammar) go back to basics: nouns and verbs. Excitement comes in writing or speaking, not in adding to the subject with adjectives (they often weaken) or adding to the verb with adverbs (they often weaken too). Pronouns are substitutes. Prepositions and conjunctions are connectors. And, ah, how rarely we use the interjection! Notice how the baby begins talking--or how you begin to learn a foreign language. A bird is a bird is a bird is a bird; bluebird is better; indigo bunting better yet; towhee is on target. Try writing using just nouns and verbs.

9. When I began to think about this talk, how hard it was to get started; a blank sheet of paper is frightening. Or how often I have to try (maybe three times) before I get into a book like *Roots*, or the *Blank Marble*. In getting children started writing poetry, whatever--

let them write in a white heat if they are lucky--or just start writing. Tell them to not worry about spelling, punctuation . . . just get it down. Then later we can revise and revise. Some advice: Allow writing to lie fallow. Come back to it later (generally it's pretty "ickey") and then delete and revise with a passion.

10. Let the children develop their own style. Great writers can be identified by the unique ways they write. Admittedly Faulkner, Hemingway, and Dreiser couldn't pass the introductory composition courses in most universities--for very different reasons: involved sentence structure, short choppy sentences, disgusting subject matter. There is less sacrosanct about grammar than I was told as a child. In my file, I have a paragraph of mine--rewritten in several styles à la Henry James, Hemingway, Poe . . . I recommend it as a device for teaching style.

11. Don't use poetry--or any other subject matter as far as that's concerned--as punishment. How many dull and dreary poems I had to memorize as a child--and be graded on the quantative holding power of my brain. It was not a joyous experience. A court case comes to mind: An elementary teacher caught a student writing an obscene word. The teacher had her write one hundred times: I will not write _____ again. The teacher was so proud of his punishment that he shared it with the principal. He was fired on the spot. There is justice in the world. There is nothing wrong with memorization of poetry, but it certainly isn't used appropriately to discipline the intellect or to discipline the student body.

12. If you are still so-so about poetry, it's rather like learning to like martinis. Exactness in the ingredients is required. In a sense I'm a born again poet. As a child, I enjoyed hunkering at the feet of neighborhood men in the evening listening to them telling tales; and as soon as I could scribble, I tried to write pieces. Then came schooling, and the end of joy and excitement. I was a back slider. Not until graduate school did I get saved in Dr. Yellen's class on contemporary poetry: The chapter and verse was "The Love Story of J. Alfred Prufrock."

What happened? I discovered that poetry was not mechanical--not just rhyme. I did not have to dissect the poem--or parrot back what he said the poet meant.

And he read the poem aloud. The poem came alive. There was excitement in his voice: He truly liked poetry. He understood. He related.

I discovered he wrote the stuff. That's important--having been there--knowing how difficult it is.

And not least, listen to the haunting words "Let us go, then you and I, . . ."

LISTEN TO THE BEAT!

Pamela J. Farris

One of the stories told about Winston Churchill pertains to an incident which occurred while he was swimming in the lake on his parents' country estate. Near the lake was a small cottage where the caretaker, a man named Fleming, lived. One day when young Winston was swimming, his leg developed a cramp. Realizing that he could not make it to shore in his condition, he began to call for help. Fleming's son heard the cries. Without regard for his own safety, young Fleming dived into the water, swam to Churchill, and extended his hand to him. Clutching Churchill in his arm, Fleming swam to shore.

Shortly after Winston had been rescued, the Churchills sent for Fleming's son to praise him for saving their son's life. Could they do anything to repay him for his heroic act? Young Fleming requested time to consider their offer. Being the son of a servant, he had not been reared in luxury. What should he ask for? Money? Land? A position with a company?

After a few days passed, Fleming approached the Churchills. He did have a lifelong dream that he wanted to achieve, but needed assistance to attain it. Fleming told them about his dream. He wanted to become a doctor. Would they help him? The Churchills said they would look into it. They discovered young Fleming was an excellent student; in fact, he could be considered a scholar, and so the necessary arrangements for Fleming to pursue his goal were made.

During World War II, when the Allied nations looked to Great Britain for moral strength and leadership, Winston Churchill, then prime minister, fell gravely ill. Various medicines were given to him, but the illness lingered. Those close to Churchill feared he would die. Then a new drug was administered and he began to recover. The drug, penicillin, had been discovered by a doctor named Fleming, the same Fleming who had saved Churchill's life once before. Because a man listened, he heard the voice of opportunity and the course of history was changed.

The importance of listening can not be overestimated. Forty-five percent of the time an individual is awake is spent listening, and ninety-eight percent of all that a person learns is obtained by listening and seeing (Nichols, 1968). Obviously, listening is an extremely vital modality for learning. Children should develop their listening skills to the fullest possible extent; for as their listening skills improve, their skills in the other language arts benefit.

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Traditionally, listening has been the neglected language art. The blab schools of yesteryear stressed mass recitation. Even if a student managed to remain silent for a brief period of time--a deed for which the punishment was a quick, hard rap across the knuckles by a relentless schoolmaster--an attempt to understand what another student was saying was very difficult. Everyone recited at the same time whether or not the material was the same.

A 1965 study by Van Wingerden indicated that teachers failed to devote as much time to teaching listening as they said they did. One reason listening has not received a great deal of attention in the classroom is the lack of emphasis it is given in language arts materials. Only recently have materials included activities devoted completely to listening skill development. Currently, there are supplementary programs available just for the development of listening skills.

Materials alone are insufficient. The factors which affect listening must be considered. Of course, hearing is a basic element. Roughly four to five percent of all children have some difficulty hearing (Donoghue, 1975). Special provisions such as seating arrangements can be made for these children.

A second factor is intelligence, which has a high correlation with listening (Brown, 1965). An individual must be able to comprehend what is being said in order for listening to take place. Taken with a grain of salt, a student's past grades can be indicative of whether or not listening is a problem for that child.

Family size is yet another factor. Children from small families tend to be better listeners than those who come from large families (Jackson, 1966). Small families have fewer conversations occurring simultaneously, thus children are more likely to concentrate on listening.

Another factor is television viewing. Children who watch television are generally better listeners than those who do not (Brown, 1967). Television--a captivating, somewhat mesmerizing device--by its very nature forces children to decode information. No opportunity is provided for the viewer to react, just absorb. Therefore, television fosters listening but not all types of listening. Presently, the question is, "Are young children capable of being critical listeners?" The answer will affect both advertising and programming.

Good listeners tend to be more emotionally stable than poor listeners (Kelly, 1963). Good listeners seem to be able to get along with others. Patience and tolerance are two qualities they possess. Speakers' idiosyncracies are ignored by good listeners, as full concentration is given to the message being delivered.

Energy is exerted when a person is listening. The pulse quickens. Anticipation becomes the name of the game. What the speaker will say

next is of utmost importance to the listener. Related knowledge pertaining to the subject is recalled and compared, with bits of information being retained and filed away for future reference. Listening triggers interest which inspires thinking. It is a stimulating cycle which affects all an individual does.

Difficulites are sometimes encountered when attempting to take a portion of the cycle, listening, and honing it until the edge becomes sharper. Often, lack of pupil interest is a problem in teaching listening skills. Involved are two critical points: relevance and purpose for listening. Children should be able to relate what they are doing to how it can be used to meet their own specific needs. It is imperative that students be kept informed. Given the reason for listening, children gain insight into the activity. A perspective is provided.

One successful activity which gives a reason for listening and provides perspective is the "special word." The class is told that a prize will be given to the first child who indicates that the teacher has used a particular word. The teacher informs the class that they are going to be selective listeners, that is, they will listen for a certain word. A discussion is then held about words and phrases they are especially attuned to. Some examples children may provide are: "home run," "murder," "ice cream," "no homework." This makes the activity relevant for the students. At that point, the teacher tells the class what the special word will be. It is best if the word is related to something in the classroom or to a class project everyone is involved with.

Many things interfere with listening besides lack of a purpose for listening and failure to find relevance for the task. An Indian proverb cautions, "Listen or thy tongue will keep you deaf." Not only what we say, but what we plan to say interrupts and causes us to miss what the speaker is telling us. Thus, our own thoughts may keep us from grasping the speaker's words.

Our experiental background provides the frame of reference from which we operate. Limited experiences greatly hinder children's listening ability. Providing numerous and varied experiences is essential, but equally important is repeating listening experiences. This enables the combinations to become firmly established in the mind for recall at a later time when the depository needs to be opened. Repetition aids listening and is one of the initial listening activities to be done with young children. For instance, a little girl who had just turned two years old was sitting on her grandmother's lap while her grandmother read Margaret Wise Brown's *Where Have You Been?* The girl listened intently as her grandmother kept repeating the phrase, "Where have you been?" as the different animals appeared on the pages. When the story was finished, she took the book in her tiny hands, turned the pages to the illustration of the toad and said, "Little toad, little toad. Been? Been?" Even at such a young age, the words that had been repeated over and over left an impression.

There are several books and poems for young children which utilize repetition. Some examples are Judith Viorst's delightful *Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day* and Bill Martin, Jr.'s *Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?* Such books can be read to children, having them say the lines in unison with the reader.

Acting out a story or poem as it is read helps children develop the ability to anticipate as they listen. Ogden Nash's "The Adventures of Isabel" is excellent for this type of activity.

Thinking becomes more refined as a child acquires new words and meanings. A young child's listening vocabulary is larger than the same child's speaking, reading, or writing vocabularies. One technique to build listening vocabularies is to read Peggy Parrish's *Amelia Bedelia* to children, letting them note the words and phrases that have multiple meanings. Reading to children not only increases their listening vocabulary but promotes an interest in books and a reason for learning to read them.

Children may or may not decide to march to a distant drummer, but prior to making that decision, they must listen to the beat.

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